



Higher Fees or a Fair and Competitive Bidding Process?

Posted by [Pierluigi Oliverio](#) on Monday, May 14, 2007

City Hall Diary

It is 11:00 p.m. on Tuesday May 8. I just finished attending my second community meeting of the night. The day has flown by!

My day began at 9:30 a.m. with a long closed-session meeting followed by a "Good Government" event at Adobe. I then went to the 1:30 p.m. Tuesday afternoon city council meeting. The garbage rate increase was on the agenda today. Although many people attended the meeting, I felt that this item should have been heard at night.

On a side note, my agenda item regarding outsourcing park maintenance at the historic Rose Garden Park was moved from the 1:30 p.m. May 2 city council meeting to the 7:00 p.m. May 15 evening meeting. My item was deferred and moved to the evening so that the unions could attend the meeting. However, the garbage increase of 28 percent was not moved to accommodate San Jose residents.

The council was asked to approve a 28 percent increase for the new garbage and recycling contract. Why? The current council policy on bidding ties our hands in delivering efficient and effective city services. Other garbage companies did not even bid on the San Jose contract because of the restrictive rules. These "rules" do not benefit the residents of San Jose; they benefit special interest groups. Unfortunately, the city does not have a true, open, competitive bid where more companies participate. San Jose should deliver better service without having to raise fees. In addition, San Jose should guarantee some sort of safeguards that service will improve before asking for any increase, especially a 28 percent increase.

I acknowledge that the price of services in relation to waste collection may rise due to labor cost, fuel, and new equipment. However, why did the cost have to rise so much? The percentage seems pretty high to me. For example, what would you do with a 28 percent increase in your household expenses? Wouldn't you try to shop around for

something cheaper? You probably would compare prices for a more affordable alternative.

Countless San Jose residents lined up and spoke against the fee increase at the council meeting. In addition, the city clerk's office received over 2,000 protest letters. One speaker in particular stood out. She spoke against the increase at the city council meeting and pleaded with the council. She said: "Fight for me...I don't feel that anyone is representing me." Her words solidified my vote. I don't think passing on higher than needed garbage rate increases is "representing my constituents."

The only person who spoke in favor of the rate hike was the head of a labor union who blamed the increase on the war in Iraq. Whether you're for or against the war, this problem of passing the buck to San Jose residents was grown in San Jose, not Iraq.

I believe the bidding process in our city leads to inflated prices for our residents. If we are a true democracy who cares about the wellbeing of our residents, we would work to change policies that hinder productive outsourcing capabilities that the city could utilize. In addition, the residents have to pay the fee regardless of whether the garbage companies pick up the refuse or skip a house.

The City of San Jose should run the city as a provider of services for its residents, not as an employer who pays above-market rates to its employees because of special interest policies.

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